

# The Target: CRIME

**Why have a central Investigations Department for investigating national crime when most investigations are conducted in the regions? Drug importations and most fraud against the Commonwealth occur in the coastal cities, away from Canberra and the Investigations Department.**

The answer, according to Assistant Commissioner Peter Lamb, is that the Investigations Department is 'the pivot which plays a central part in setting the whole national commitment to work'. It has a distinct role which complements the work in the regions.

Like the AFP in general, the Department has seen considerable change since 1979, and the increasingly important role it plays reflects the Commonwealth's attitude to crime.

"The more crime you look for, the more you find," Mr Lamb points out. "This may sound self-evident, but the fact remains that for every drug trafficker convicted, another 20 are ready to take his or her place.

"Similarly, as methods for identifying fraud are improved, the extent of fraud revealed is greater.

"The increasingly sophisticated methods employed by organised criminal groups means that we have to keep improving to match them," he says.

"The Commonwealth, mainly through the AFP, has assumed a particular and very important national role in law enforcement and the Investigations Department, with the regions, is working to maximise its effectiveness."

## **Organised crime**

The creation of the AFP took place at a critical time, Mr Lamb believes.

The Commonwealth had previously maintained a limited role in law enforcement on the basis that the task was properly left to the States.

Criminal law had not been reviewed for a long time and the former Commonwealth Police, which had primary responsibility for enforcement of Commonwealth



*Assistant Commissioner Peter Lamb, left, and Commander Adrien Whiddett confer on progress of a targetting operation.*

law, was described by Justice Williams in his Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs report as lacking an adequate 'law enforcement base'.

The Moffat Royal Commission of 1974 registered early concern over the entrenchment of organised crime within the Australian society and warned of its long-term goals. Subsequent Commissioners echoed these concerns.

## **Important role**

Commander Adrien Whiddett, Officer-in-Charge of the Drugs and Special Operations Division, believes the concerted views of the Royal Commissioners prompted recognition that the Commonwealth had a more important role to play in law enforcement. Mr Lamb endorses this view and adds that the Commissions not only led to the development of law enforcement efforts but increased public awareness of the scale of crime the AFP was called on to investigate.

"This was heightened by investigations into bottom-of-the-harbour tax minimisation schemes and the murder of individuals involved in alleged drug offences," he says.

The AFP established early that a more demanding and complex approach to criminal activity required a more thorough means of attack. At a political level, increased co-operation led to the creation of a number of agencies and projects, including the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) (1981), the National Police Research Unit (1982) under the auspices of the Australian Police Ministers' Council (1980) and joint task forces in New South Wales and Victoria. The concern over illicit drug demand and supply resulted in the 1985 Drug Summit and the establishment of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy and the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse.

The appearance of the National Crime Authority in 1984 and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions the same year had an immediate bearing on the AFP. The NCA was created to target criminal activities beyond the scope of conventional policing methods with extra-ordinary powers. References are provided by the Commonwealth, the States or the Northern Territory and approved by an Inter-Government Committee.

The Office of the DPP was established

to upgrade the system of prosecuting offences against the laws of the Commonwealth. The Director is empowered to conduct prosecutions, seek civil remedies where possible and consider applications for indemnity.

Superintendent John Barr, of the NCIB, supports the view that the DPP represents a 'more organised way to handle prosecutions'. He believes access to the lawyers' expertise is valuable.

The AFP's first charter, issued in June 1981, referred to the investigation of organised crime, particularly drug trafficking activities. The second charter, of August 1985, indicated that the AFP should regard the investigation of drug trafficking, organised crime and fraud against the Commonwealth as its three most important functions. These functions were to be performed by the Investigations Department in conjunction with the regions.

Both charters emphasised the significance of national criminal investigations and the need to determine priorities and set targets.

The fourth priority, special investigations of sensitive matters referred to the AFP by the Government, indicated the Government's confidence in the AFP. Such investigations, performed by the NCIB, are often politically sensitive and require considerable care.

## Intelligence

In the past ten years, the Investigations Department has greatly improved its capacity to support operational activity.

"A deliberate policy has been adopted to develop a greater pro-active capability in the fields of drug trafficking, organised crime and fraud," Mr Lamb says. "The development and use of criminal intelligence has been a central part of this activity, through the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence."

The Bureau collates and evaluates information and develops and distributes strategic intelligence planning and policy at national and international levels.

BCI police staff numbers have risen from eight to 52 in the past 10 years, to meet these demands, with similar increases in Public Service staff. Superintendent Gary Symons, of the BCI, maintains that computer developments also have greatly improved the Bureau's ability to make information readily available and to develop intelligence.

The facility is continually being devel-

oped to assist operational units, at the same time, providing the AFP with an improved strategic capability, in line with the Government's objectives and priorities, Mr Lamb says.

BCI analysts responsible for developing intelligence procedures and providing strategic and tactical intelligence crucial to investigations also have been increased in numbers. A counter-intelligence officer also has been appointed in a significant initiative in Australian law enforcement. This officer is responsible for operational security and will develop a counter-intelligence doctrine for implementation within the force.

Mr Lamb says the central basing of the BCI in headquarters ensures that a wide coverage of intelligence is developed and used effectively. Expansion of the overseas liaison officer network has brought an increase in the flow of intelligence vital for AFP operations, and as the Investigations Department co-ordinates all information between the liaison offices and Australia it can determine how this intelligence should be used.

## Targetting

As part of its pro-active capability, the AFP has developed criminal targetting procedures through an Organised Crime Branch component. Pro-active targetting means identifying certain individuals or groups believed to be involved in significant criminal activities and setting out to compile evidence against them through various methods, including sur-

veillance, syndicate infiltration and informants.

"While considerable faith is placed in the future of pro-active policing there remains a need for traditional methods," Mr Lamb says. The work of the Drug Operations Branch, which co-ordinates drug investigations, has increased considerably in the volume of work in recent years.

Superintendent Dick Downing, Officer-in-Charge, points out that the creation of overseas liaison positions meant much more involvement in co-ordinating activities with other countries.

Legislation, too, has improved operational capability — and workload. Telephone interceptions, carried out within the Department by the Telecommunications Intelligence Branch under the Telecommunications (Interception) Act, have greatly assisted in the collection of information relating to inquiries, Mr Lamb says.

Executive Officer (Investigations), Murray Hanson, sees the Department as "drawing the strings together". National operations are normally sensitive, extending beyond one region and even internationally and require additional resources. In some cases the Department monitors the expenditure involved and reports on developments. Although the handling of operations remains the prerogative of case officers, the Department is able to make the most of available resources and identify operational priorities. ■



Malabar rubbish tip, Sydney, where just under 1 tonne of cannabis resin was recovered in November 1985 as a result of Operation Lavender.